

democratic societies are soft, and it's a matter of time before we pull out.

And that's why one message that I will continue to send to the enemy is, don't count on us leaving before the mission is complete. Don't bet on it; don't bet on American politics forcing my hand, because it's not going to happen. I'm going to make decisions not based upon politics but based upon what's best for the United States of America.

But I understand why people, Richard, are concerned, because progress is hard to see. You know, it's one thing to say, "We've got Zarqawi;" that's progress; it's another thing to say, "I met with the man, and I believe he can make the right decisions." And so somebody is going to say, "Sure, well, show me." And I understand that. And I understand how tough it is for the American people to reconcile death on their TV screens with the President saying, we're making incremental progress toward an important goal. But what I hope they understand is how important it is we succeed in Iraq, that the country is more dangerous if we don't—the world is more dangerous if we don't succeed.

And so I'm going to keep talking about it and talking about—because I believe passionately we're doing the right thing. And I've told the American people this: If I didn't think we could succeed and if I didn't think it was worth it, I'd pull our troops out. And I mean that.

And one reason I went to Iraq yesterday, no matter how secretive the trip was, was to get a firsthand feel for how those people are thinking over there, what are they like. I understand leadership. Leadership requires determination. You've got to be determined to do something in order to be able to lead, particularly in difficult circumstances. You've got to have will. You've got to have desire to succeed, and you've got to have a plan. And that's what I found in Iraq.

It's really important that the Iraqi people have no doubt in their mind that we will help this Government succeed. It's important for them to understand that. And I know there's going to be different voices, and there should be different voices out of America. That's where we're great. That's what makes us interesting and great; people can say whatever they want to say as they try to attract votes.

But my voice—what you hear from me, no matter what these polls and all the business look like, is that it's worth it, it is necessary, and we will succeed.

Thank you all very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 9:45 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, Minister of Defense Abd al-Qadir al-Mufriji, Minister of Interior Jawad al-Bulani, Minister of Electricity Karim Wahid al-Hasan, Speaker of the Council of Representatives Mahmoud al-Mashhadani, and Deputy Speaker of the Council of Representatives Khaled Ateia of Iraq; senior Al Qaida associate Abu Musab Al Zarqawi, who was killed in Baquba, Iraq, on June 7; Gen. George W. Casey, Jr., USA, commanding general, Multi-National Force—Iraq; U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Zalmay Khalilzad; Robert M. Kimmit, Deputy Secretary of the Treasury; Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Patrick J. Fitzgerald, U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois and Department of Justice CIA leak investigation Special Prosecutor; and Col. Mark Tillman, USAF, commander, Presidential Airlift Group. A reporter referred to former Ambassador Joseph C. Wilson IV, who served as CIA envoy to Niger in February, 2002.

Remarks Following Discussions With President Alvaro Uribe of Colombia June 14, 2006

President Bush. Thank you all for coming. It's my honor to welcome back to the Oval Office *mi amigo, el Presidente*. Mr. President, we're glad you're here. This is my first chance to be able to congratulate the President for a very strong victory. I asked him what it's like to win with a lot of votes. [Laughter] He was obviously a good campaigner that had a message that the Colombian people appreciated. So first of all, congratulations for a grand victory.

President Uribe is a personal friend. I'm able to talk very frankly with him about a variety of subjects. I told him that one of the things I admire is, he's a strong believer in democracy, human rights, human dignity. He's got a tough job in dealing with narcoterrorist groups in his country, but he's committed to dealing firmly with narcoterrorism. He's committed to helping reconcile past differences. He's committed

to helping people get back into society. And I appreciate those commitments. He's committed to human rights.

We talked about trade. We negotiated a free trade agreement. We've still got some details to work out, but we committed ourselves to working out those details and try to get this done as quickly as we can. I will submit the agreement to Congress once it gets done, and I would hope members of both political parties understand the importance of a free trade agreement with this vital ally of ours.

We talked about the neighborhood. We talked about—he came from a meeting with some of the Andean neighbors, and he brought messages, and he shared some thoughts with me. I appreciate strategizing with the President about how to make sure our neighborhood is a peaceful and hopeful place.

I told President Uribe that one of the things I will do a better job of is communicating to the people of South America and Central America my country's desire to promote justice and education and health. We spend about \$1.6 billion a year in Central and South America. I want the people to understand that money is meant to help them, to help improve their lives. I want the people to understand America is a considerate country, that we care about justice.

And so, Mr. President, I am really pleased you're here. It's good to see you again. And again, congratulations on a great victory.

President Uribe. Thank you, Mr. President. I want to repeat my gratitude to your Government, to you personally, to your Congress, to the U.S. public opinion, for the permanent support of my country. I appreciate your friendship, your permanent advice, and we have many challenges before us.

One challenge is that Colombia can overcome this long nightmare of terrorism. I understand the mandate my fellow country citizens have given me to work harder and with better results for my country to get peace, and the United States cooperation is necessary.

In the last 2 years, we have not gotten the—[inaudible]—result in dropping the areas with illegal drugs. One point we have studied this morning with President Bush is

how to speed up the eradication of drugs, because we need to show better results in this area.

And of course, as President Bush has informed to you, we spoke about our free trade agreement and some pending points. And we spoke about the necessity in Colombia and in all the Central American and South American countries to improve social cohesion. For I thank President Bush, he's willing—his willingness and determination to help us in education, in social issues, because we need to conduct hand in hand our fight against terrorism with our fight to create social cohesion, not only in Colombia but in the whole region as well.

President Bush. *Gracias, amigo.* Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:06 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks.

Remarks Following a Meeting With the Iraq Study Group

June 14, 2006

I want to thank a distinguished group of Americans, led by Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton, for your willingness to look at the way forward in Iraq and to provide advice to the administration, to the Congress, and to the American people about the proper strategies and tactics to achieve success.

Iraq is a complex situation. It is vital that we succeed. And the fact that you all are willing to lend your expertise to help chart the way forward means a lot. And I can't thank you enough. We've got Republicans at the table; we've got Democrats at the table; we've got people who've served in the administration, administrations past, our court system, and the legislative branch. And you bring a lot of expertise and a lot of knowledge, and the fact that you're willing to lend your expertise and knowledge to help our country means a lot.

Once again, you've been called to serve, and once again, you are serving, and we thank you for that a lot. Appreciate you very much.